The Importance of Making Your Home Fit Your Personality

Mlle. Lenique, the Newest Fashionable Parisian Portait Painter, Tells Why Blondes Should Live Among Louis XVI. Surroundings, Brunettes Among Renaissance, and Why Stout People's Furniture Ought to Be Strictly Louis XIV.

MISS ANDREE LENIQUE, the distinguished Parisian portrait painter whose work was decorated by the French Government, has had an excellent opportunity to observe the interior decoration of the wealthy and fashionable homes of New York. Miss Lenique has a studio in the Sherwood, in West Fifty-seventh street, where she has been painting the portraits of many prominent and attractive New York women.

In the following interview Miss Lenique makes some entertaining comments on the decoration of New York homes and some practical suggestions to the women who preside over them.

By Mlle. ANDREE LENIQUE (In an Interview)

THERE is nothing in the world so becoming to a woman as a home that suits her.

Every woman should seek to have her home decorated in harmony with her beauty or, at least, her personality.

More magnificent homes are being created in New York to-day than in any other place. Now is the time when the true principles of interior decoration should be studied and mastered.

It is really surprising how little time New York women of the wealthy and fashionable classes spend at home. What with shopping, visits to restaurants and hotels, lunches, matinees and so on, they are out practically the whole day.

In French society it is considered quite improper for the woman to be out of her home in the morning.

If the New York woman followed my suggestion of decorating her home in harmony with her personality she would stay at home more. She would have an interest to keep her there, and the place would have more attraction for her.

Many women impose their ideas on the decorator without having sufficient knowledge of the subject. That is a mistake. Again they allow the decorator to go ahead and develop a scheme that is not in harmony with the owner's personality.

I offer a few suggestions that will help American women to choose schemes of decoration and furniture in harmony with their personality.

Let the blonde follow the Louis XVI. style, the brunette the Renaissance style, the auburn-haired the Venetian style, the stout woman the Louis XIV. style and the elderly lady the Restoration style.

After all, I believe that there is nothing so becoming to so many women as our French Louis XVI. style—the graceful furniture with the swan's neck motive, so often used in chairs and couches. The light and delicate tones of hangings and other fabrics make a home that is most expressive of feminine charm and daintiness.

This style breathes the spirit of a period when social gallantry and grace reached a finer development than they have ever done before or since. That was the period preceding the French Revolution, when our nobility cultivated such exquisite manners. The women devoted their lives to coquetry and the men to love-making. They did not worry about the dollar then. They acted as if money came naturally, like the rain and sunshine.

The Duc de Richelieu was one of the greatest ornaments of the time. He raised flirtation to a fine art. He could win a woman with an epigram. It was easier for him than taking a cocktail is for you American men. You must not confuse him with the Cardinal, who lived in a cruder period.

Women nowadays think so much about being beautiful. I find that many of the most charming women of our most charming period were quite plain. Their manners, their conversation and their surroundings made them attractive. Furniture helped to make them fascinating. A graceful chair may compensate for a clumsy figure. A well-chosen fabric will soften a poor complexion.

Nothing can make a woman more attractive than a drawing room, salon, boudoir or whatever you call it, in skilfully executed Louis XVI. style. It breathes the very atmosphere of coquetry, of fascination, of entertaining conversation.

I have suggested this as the most suitable style for a blonde, but it is really suitable for every woman who can stand light tones. It is best for the blonde because a heavier style is crushing to her exquisite, delicate beauty.

There is a new decorator in Paris who covers walls with black paper and decorates houses entirely in black. He has persuaded one of his customers to sleep on black sheets in a black bed, with just a little white lace trimming. He says that it sets off her charms in the most effective manner.

Horrible thought! A black room is enough to make anybody ill. I feel the same way about the misguided genius who decorates rooms in dark purple.

Rooms intended for daytime use should be decorated in light colors—delicate grays, greens, blues, browns and yellows. A dining room or smoking room may be dark.

Rich, dark woodwork harmonizes with the worship of Bacchus.

The Renaissance style of decoration and furniture is the handsomest of all. I have suggested it as the most suitable setting for a brunette. By this I mean rather that it is best for a woman of strongly marked type. If the blonde feels that her personality is sufficiently commanding she may choose Renaissance.

It seems to me that a Renaissance apartment, with its splendid decorations and rich hangings, should be the home of some romantic, majestic figure like our Marguerite of Navarre. She was a magnificent type of the princesses of the Renaissance period. She was a patron of artists, poets and singers. That extremely gay collection of stories by her, "The Heptameron," suggests how deeply she drank of the cup of life.

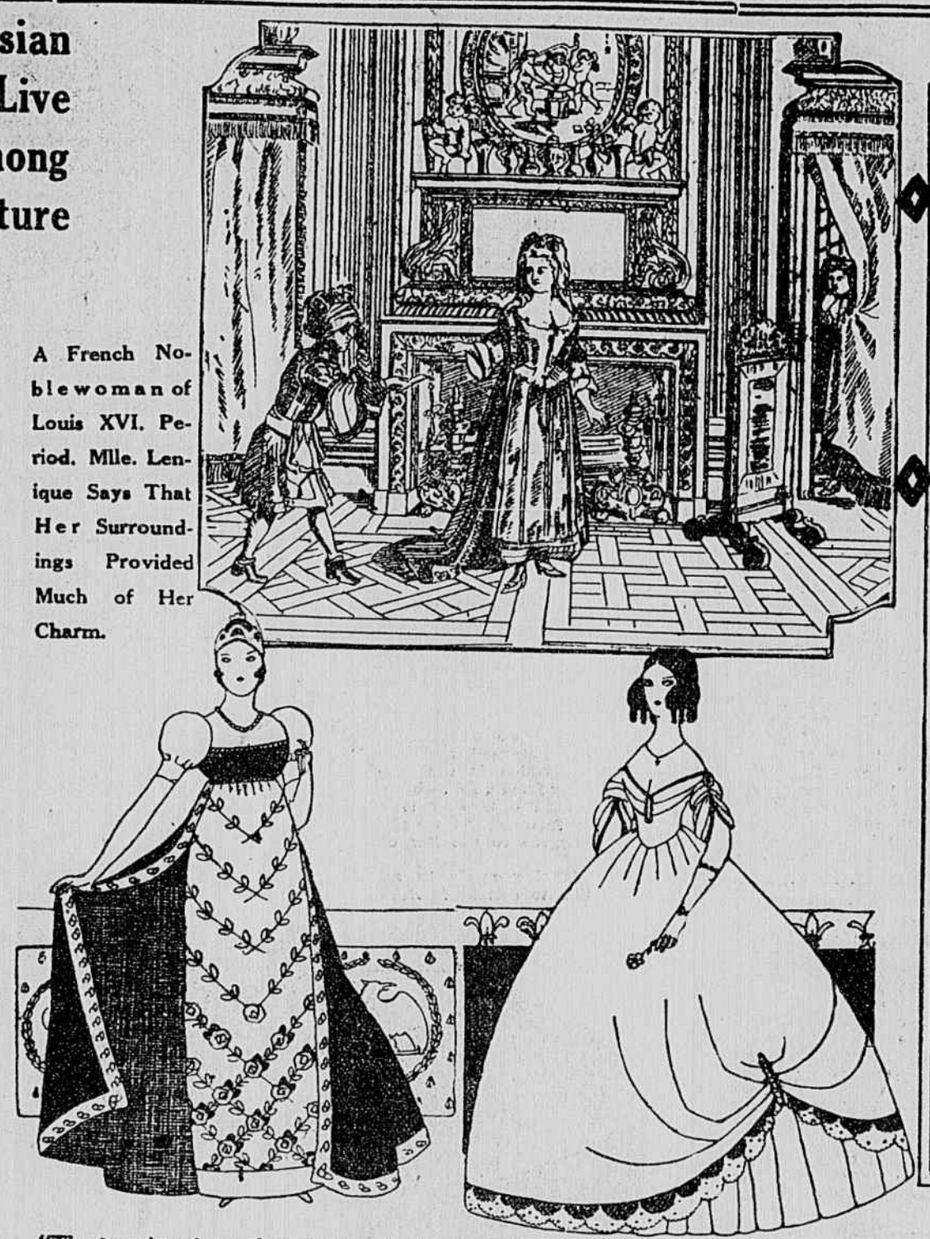
A modern society woman who modelled her life on that of Marguerite of Navarre would certainly be interesting. People would not feel bored at her home. Of course there are some ways in which it would be quite impossible for a modern lady to follow her.

There is an old story about her that, having entertained a poor wandering minstrel most royally, she thought it best when he said goodbye to her that he should say goodbye to life. From the gorgeous Renaissance chamber with its carved furniture, its rich brocaded hangings, its silver goblets and tall candlesticks he went to a grave down in the deep dark cellar of the chateau. His last views of life were glorious. The idea is that she did not care to have it whispered in court circles that she had known a person of such humble position. Modern social impertinence cannot approach this. The conduct of the girl who flirts with a man at the sea shore, but cuts him dead in town, may have the same basis, but it is very cold and tame in comparison.

Probably the story is exaggerated, as Voltaire said of the report of his own death. Queen Marguerite must have had fine qualities or the poets of the time would not be so enthusiastic about her. I believe there was a warmth and spontaneity about her manner that would win popularity for a hostess of to-day.

The furniture of the Louis XIV. period is handsome, but heavier and less graceful than the Louis XVI. style. The earlier period is distinguished by couches and arm chairs of very solid framework, often with lion's head decorations. The arm chairs are very spacious, because the wide hoop skirts of the period required it.

Both for aesthetic and practical reasons this style is most appropriate for stout women, of whom there are many in New York. It is most disconcerting to watch a fine, solid woman sitting on a slender chair that threatens to smash



A French Noblewoman of Louis XVI. Period. Mlle. Lenique Says That Her Surroundings Provided Much of Her Charm.

"The Empire style, though stately, is stiff and does not harmonize with feminine fascination."

"Large chairs grew up to accommodate the crinoline, and now they are very nice for stout women."

Mlle. Andree Lenique, the Parisian Portrait Painter, Who Chats Wittily About House hold Decoration.

under her. As I said before, furniture should match the personality.

The Empire style is handsome and stately, but I find that it does not harmonize with the most dainty feminine graces. After all, it is identified with the time of Napoleon's domination, and we know that he had little appreciation of woman's finer qualities.

It is a pleasure to see furniture that really has style. A collection of expensive furniture not held together by harmony of style is like a company of well dressed lunatics.

What horrors I see in the houses of the wealthy! Luxurious but hideous arm chairs, thick downy carpets whose colors quarrel with everything about them; superb radiators, enormous bathrooms decorated with strange fishes and reptiles, wonderful electric chandeliers, and other things too terrible to mention.

If a French nobleman of the eighteenth century should be suddenly confronted with these things the delightful compliments he was accustomed to utter would be frozen on his lips.

A harmoniously and agreeably decorated home is better than one filled with the most costly works of art. Too many pictures spoil the walls. A few good family portraits placed in thoroughly suitable places give personality to the house.

Some American houses are simply plastered with bogus Corots, Bouguereaus, Bonnats, et cetera. They may be horribly ugly—not even painted with good paint—but they are signed with a name. That is sufficient.

I was not surprised to learn that a very flourishing industry here is the production of bogus Corots and other works of the Barbizon school. I understand that some of the most promising artists of this industrial school were formerly bootblacks.

When the American law was recently changed so as to permit foreign pictures over twenty years old to come in duty free these industrious workers protested. They said: "You will ruin a great American industry." But Congress had progressed to a point where such an argument would not hold water, and so the law was changed. Thus civilization progresses.

The law as it stands is sufficiently absurd. The work of a rising European painter of the day must pay a duty because it would compete with the product of the native artist. No good American artist asks for such protection, because it would be asking for protection against the superior brains of others. The protection is only for the daubers and forgers.

I do not say this in criticism of American taste in general. Such things are the outcome of a conspiracy between little groups of commercial schemers and stupid politicians. Americans as private citizens are the most generous patrons of art in the world.

Here is an example: Mr. Crane, of Chicago, has furnished funds to Alphonse Mucha, the Bohemian artist, to enable him to execute a colossal series of decorations illustrating the history of Bohemia. They are to be placed in a public building. So Bohemia is to have her history perpetuated at the expense of a private Chicago citizen. It is remarkable.

The lot of a rich man who feels that he has to buy pictures is often a sad one. I knew a wealthy man who built a great new house and employed an artist who painted dreadful cherubs and goddesses all over the ceiling of the main salon.

"I don't see that that makes the house any better," candidly remarked a friend with a little hard common sense.

"But I had to have something painted," said the poor rich man.

It is the woman's business to make the home beautiful, not by buying pictures and statues, but by choosing harmonious and agreeably contrasting tints and furniture of good style.

After all, it is color that does most toward beautifying an apartment. An eye for color is a born gift as much as a musical ear. We all recognize the special nature of the musical ear, but few realize that the same is true of the color sense. A pleasingly contrasted color scheme makes me thrill with physical joy.

For harmonious contrast, the juxtaposition of two or more complementary colors is not all that is necessary. They must also differ in tone and show an opposition of light to dark.

A pleasingly contrasted effect will hold its own against time for a much longer period than a more general composition, for the same reason that a dress of contrasted colors continues to look well, where clothing of the same prevailing hue would look shabby and faded.

When the dominant color has been chosen, the color scheme should be arranged as an imaginary palette, which includes the hangings, furniture and rugs. We may work above the general color to brilliance and below it to more neutral hues. A cabinet or even a china vase with other objects around it may give us the focus of brilliant color. The rugs and carpet should supply the lower tones of color required.

Conscience an Untrusty Guide - - By Dr. Charles H. Parkhurst

AND if he had not thought he ought to do them, he would not have done them, for Paul did what he thought was right, not only after he became a Christian, just just as much while he was still a Jew.

Integrity was a marked feature of the man throughout his entire life, by which I mean that he was permanently possessed of the disposition to do what his conscience required of him. We all of us come pretty near to having the same disposition as he, although that is not saying much for ourselves as might first appear.

We should not, for example consider that it is giving much credit to a man who hardly knows his letters, to say to him that he has the disposition to spell as well as he knows how. We should not want to be understood as eulogizing the architecture of the wild men of Borneo in saying that they show a disposition to conform their dwellings to architectural principles to the extent that they know what those principles are.

No man ever does anything that he considers to be extremely bad. The margin between what we do and what we think we ought to do, if there be any margin, is regularly a narrow margin. A broad margin would be too broad to render the act possible. Every man is tethered to his conscience, and he and his conscience never get more than so far apart. We never commit an evil deed that is so bad that the violence done our conscience is greater than the pleasure issuing to us from the deed.

The agreement therefore between one's act and one's conscience—what we call conscientiousness—does not therefore signify very much, for to do at least pretty nearly what we at the moment think it right to do, is a part of the human constitution, and has hardly more meaning than does the balance which every one maintains between appetite and eating. If we do not eat what our sense of taste is disgusted with, no more do we do what our sense of right is digusted with.

So that in claiming for himself that, even prior to his conversion, he had always acted conscientiously, St. Paul was not after all claiming a great deal for himself, and does not pretend that he was, does not admit that he was. He says that in persecuting the Christians he did what he felt at the time he ought to do, and yet in one of his letters, written later, he declares that just because he persecuted them he was not fit to be called an Apostle. This throws rather a lurid light on the much betrumpeted virtue of conscientiousness. Paul did what he thought he ought to do, and yet afterward went down in dust and ashes for having done it.

Then conscience is not reliable? Exactly so; that is precisely the point. Conscientiousness is not a Christian virtue. If it is replied that this is a view of things that is upsetting, the only answer I would make to that is that if a vehicle is already wrong side up an upset is the best thing that can happen to it. And to deal quite seriously with the matter it is indeed strange that there prevails so much tendency to treat conscience as authoritative and conformity to conscience as righteousness, especially in view of the fact that the conscience of different people render discrepant decisions, and in view still farther of the fact that the conscience of the same person renders different decisions at different times, as in the instance of St. Paul just quoted.

Perhaps the habit of so regarding it is a late echo from the lesson that may have been taught us as children, that the conscience is the voice of God in the heart. But a voice that tells a different story to different people and a different story to the same person at different times and under different conditions is not a voice whose claims to divineness we could quite consistently allow.

In this we are not disturbing at all the moral foundations of things, but only trying to clear away a little of the debris that has gathered upon those foundations. We are making no denial of the eternal distinction between right and wrong, nor denying the existence in us of a moral sense answering to that eternal distinction as the eye answers to the light of the world, and the ear to the music that is in the world.

Our contention is only against the notion, which for one reason or another has acquired a strange degree of prevalence, that conscience has inhering in it a certain element of infallibility such that disregarding the monition of conscience is eo ipso a bit of depravity, and conforming to its monition necessarily an act of righteousness, and that the whole moral ground has been satisfactorily covered when a man says of any act of his that he has done what his conscience required of him.

Now in all the common affairs of life, in all our dealings with everyday facts—facts of science, facts of business, facts of our profession—we prosecute all kinds of careful investigation in order to determine exactly what the facts are; for we realize that the truth of things is something entirely independent of any view that we may happen to have of things, and that any view of them that we may hold is not creditable, is not intellectually respectable, and is not to be adopted as a sane rule of action, unless it conforms to reality, and that any carelessness in adopting a view regardless of such conformity or non-conformity convicts us of insincerity or at any rate of intellectual childishness.

If, for example, I had somehow gotten the impression that two times fifteen are thirty-five, and at the impulse of that impression carried that unique system of multiplication into all my arithmetical calculations and into all my financial operations, the fact that such was my honest impression would not undo the erroneousness of my figuring, would not intellectually acquit me, and would not exonerate me from the charge of what might be called mental immorality, especially if I were a person endowed with ordinary powers of mind and furnished with ordinary opportunities of mental training.

In all such matters we study in order that we may get at the facts; we school our powers in order that we may be more competent to get at the facts. In all the solid business of life we never venture to act at the impulse and under the guidance of accidental whim. And although even in the practical matters of secular experience we do have to take some things for granted, and cannot altogether exclude the elements of venture, yet to the degree that we are intelligent and sane we seek always to reduce the element of venture to a minimum.

We understand that in the world of physical event—the fall of a stone, the unfolding of a leaf, the rushing of the wind, the swing of a star—there is nothing which transpires that has not its own particular ordinance applicable to it, that there is not in the universe a square inch that is not covered by exact authority and administered by a scrupulous sovereignty, and when the scientist moves forth exploringly into the physical world what he tries to do is to find what is the particular ordinance to which each great or little transaction in nature is amenable.

Now, we are not thinking of the great world of moral event in that way. There are innumerable situations and wide areas of moral action that one would judge that we suppose to be as exempt from any element of obligation as though there were no such thing as obligation. Duty therefore ceases to be to us a serious concern. We do not study to know what is right because not realizing that there is a right and wrong in each particular act of ours entirely apart from any opinion that we may happen to have of its rightness and wrongness.

Supposing, therefore, as we seem to, that there is no eternal and divine "Ought" attaching to each act that comes before us to be done or not to be done, and that the righteousness of an act consists principally in our supposing it to be righteous, society falls into a condition of what might be called moral anarchy, ethical Nihilism, producing very much the same condition among men as would be produced in the world of literature if every man concocted his own alphabet and manufactured his own dictionary; very much the same condition as would be induced on the street if every banker and broker invented his own multiplication tbble.

That is the object that God had in giving to the world the law of Moses and in giving to men subsequently the very much closer and severer law of Jesus Christ, that men might understand that righteousness is not a thing that can be improvised, that any act is right not because a man thinks it is right or supposes or imagines it is right, but because it IS right, because it conforms to the everlasting reality of things and squares with the instincts of the eternal and divine mind.

The failure to proceed on that principle is what creates all the moral discords in society, discords that we are so sensible of at the present time; and the inharmonious jangling of it is like what we should have in a chorus choir made up of a million voices, every voice singing his own tune and pitched in his own key. Choruses are not conducted in that way; each singer does not extemporize his own tune or pitch. He sings the tune that is given him to sing, and sings it to the keynote that is sounded into him before the singing begins.

There is only one system of mathematics the world over, but there are nearly as many systems of ethics as there are individuals, because in matters pertaining to conduct each man had rather settle the matter of duty himself than to have duty determined for him by any outside authority. He had rather do as he likes than submit himself to any objective requirements, human or divine, throwing a moral complexion over the situation, however, by calling his decision an ethical decision, and conformity to the decision an act of conscientiousness—a mode of performance which, if practised on any other field, scientific or professional, would entail upon the performer the reputation of intellectual prig or imbecile.

While, therefore, in all questions of right and wrong we have to act according to the dictates of conable, and one large part of our moral and religious obligation is to go on improving it and thus bring it into closer and closer accord with the mind of God.